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A decade of health care reform in Argentina

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Belmartino S. *Una década de reforma en la atención médica en Argentina* [A decade of health care reform in Argentina]. *Salud Colectiva* (La Plata, Argentina) 2005 mayo – agosto; 1(2):155-171.

Objectives: To describe the current (2005) state of the Argentinean social security health care system (called “*obras sociales*” in Argentina) and its organization prior to reform; to systematically describe the positions of the principal social actors involved in the reform process; and to analyze the determining factors of the process.

Methodology: Analytical and interpretative, based on an analysis of documents.

Results: The author analyzes the strategies used by the Argentinean government in the social security health system reform in the 1990s, comparing the proposals formulated by the reformers with the results obtained. The strategies emphasized were: deregulation of health insurance, with particular emphasis on free choice of funds by social security health plan beneficiaries (previously prohibited), and liberalization of contracts between insurance funds (*obras sociales*) and providers. The analysis is set in the historical context of social security health care in Argentina. The author distinguishes between three major groups of actors in charge of funding coverage: union, management, and provincial *obras sociales*. She then analyzes the basis and operation of prepaid medicine, administrators of capitated systems, and direct providers. The 2004 Federal Health Plan is briefly analyzed. The author agrees with its assessment, but questions the reforms proposed in the plan.

Conclusions: The author concludes that problems were accurately diagnosed in the proposed reforms in the 1990s and recently, but they were followed by strategies incapable of guaranteeing the introduction of the proposed changes.